*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of* CHRIST.

A

# SERMON

Preached before

His Majesty's High Commissioner

TO THE

## General Assembly

OF THE

## *Church of* Scotland

IN THE

## High Church of *Edinburgh*,

On the 7th of *May* 1732.

By ARCHIBALD GIBSON M. A. Minister of the Gospel at St. *Ninians*.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the Most Honourable,

# WILLIAM-HENRY,

## Marquis of *Lothian*,

Earl of *Ancrum*, Viſcount of *Bryen*, Lord *Ker* of *Newbottle*, *Oxnam*, *Jedburgh*, *Dolphington* and *Niſbet*, &c.

His Majesty's High Commiſſioner to the General Aſſembly of the Church of *Scotland*,

THIS

# DISCOURSE

Is humbly dedicated by

*Your Lordſhip's moſt humble,*

*moſt obedient, and moſt*

*devoted humble Servant,*

Arch. Gibson.

# Advertiſement.

I Can ſcarce offer any Apology to the Publick for preſuming to appear in Print: Only, my Lord Commiſſioner had the Goodneſs to approve of the following Diſcourſe: And ſome of the Hearers, whoſe Judgment I ought to regard, adviſed me to publiſh it. If any Thing I have advanced ſhall contribute, in the leaſt, to promote either the Belief or Practice of true Chriſtianity; I ſhall think the Pains I have taken, in tranſcribing and making ſome few Additions, well beſtowed.

# Advertisement.

I Can scarce offer any Apology to the Publick for presuming to appear in Print: Only, my Lord Commissioner had the Goodness to approve of the following Discourse: And some of the Heaters, whose Judgment I ought to regard, advised me to publish it. If any Thing I have advanced, to promote either the Belief or Practice of true Christianity, I shall think the Pains I have taken in transcribing and making it fit for Publication, well bestowed.

# A SERMON, &c.

## Rom. i. 16.

*I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

THE preaching of Chriſt crucified hath, for many Ages, proven a ſtumbling Block to ſome, and Fooliſhneſs to others: The Doctrines of Chriſtianity have been run down, and the Myſteries of the Goſpel ridiculed by the wiſe Men of this World: Some have in a more open and avowed Manner, and others in Diſguiſe, thrown abundant Contempt on that ſacred Revelation whereof Chriſt is the Author: And while it hath been pretended, that the Doctrines of Jeſus were abſurd and unreaſonable, the real Ground of the Controverſy rather was, that the Laws of Chriſt (however excellent in themſelves and beneficial to Men) ſeemed ſevere and intolerable: *The Grace of God which bringeth Salvation, teaches Men to deny all Ungodlineſs and worldly Luſts, to live ſoberly,*

*righteouſly and godly* (*a*). *To put off the old Man with his Deeds: To mortify their Members which are on Earth: To crucify the Fleſh with the Luſts and Affections thereof.* The Goſpel of Chriſt forbids us to conform our Hearts or Lives to this World; it expreſly calls us to *ſet our Affections on Things above* (*b*); *to live by Faith on the Son of God; to be holy as he who calleth us is holy*; and to ſacrifice every temporal Enjoyment rather than run the Hazard of loſing a Happineſs beyond Death and the Grave: May we not ſuppoſe, that for ſuch Reaſons as theſe Chriſtianity hath, both formerly and of late, been contradicted and reviled; that Men have exerted themſelves to baffle a Report ſo contrary to all their carnal Intereſts and vicious Inclinations: They have *loved Darkneſs rather than Light, becauſe their Deeds are evil.*

Nevertheleſs, Multitudes to whom the Word of this Salvation was ſent have not *received the Grace of God in vain*; and in this Way, reckoned Foolhneſs by the World, the all-wiſe God hath accompliſht the Deliverance of them that believe: There are thouſands inheriting the Kingdom of Glory, who were trained up for that State of Perfection by attending the Means of Grace; and who will for ever celebrate the Praiſes of him who afforded them the Advantage of dwelling in his Houſe, and hearing *the joyful Sound.*

The inſpired Writer of this Epiſtle, who lived in a World over-run with Infidelity and Wickedneſs, was ſo fully convinced of the Truth and Excellency of the Chriſtian Revelation, and felt ſo much of the

(*a*) Tit. 2. 11, 12. Eph. 4. 12—29. Col. 3. 5.— (*b*) Col. 3. 1—4.

the Light and Efficacy of the Word of Grace upon his own Heart, that with Conſtancy and Reſolution he avows the Chriſtian Cauſe, nay makes his Boaſt of it, in the midſt of a Generation of Infidels.

*I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt*; as if the Apoſtle had ſaid, However my unhappy *Kinſmen, according to the Fleſh*, are ſcandalized at the Name, the Character, and Doctrine of that Chriſt whom I preach; however the Philoſophers of *Greece*, and Orators of *Rome*, think it vaſtly below them to approve of, and fall in with the Chriſtian Scheme; however no Name is ſo generally contemptible as that of a *Chriſtian*, and though all the Intereſt and Learning, all the Wit and Power of the World are united to oppoſe the Goſpel of Chriſt; yet, I who ſee its Beauty and feel its Power, far from being either jeſted or threatned out of the Faith and Hope of a Chriſtian, do reckon it my Duty and Intereſt to believe and embrace this Goſpel, my Honour to profeſs it, my Glory to preach it, and my Joy to ſuffer for it. I perceive *the Fooliſhneſs of God to be wiſer than Men, and the Weakneſs of God to be ſtronger than Men (a)*: When the exalted Prince and Saviour goes forth in the Chariot of this deſpiſed Goſpel; when the Rod of invincible Strength is ſent out of *Zion*, the People become willing in the Day of Power: And as a Proof that the Doctrine is of God, both *Jews* and *Gentiles* have already, in great Numbers, experienced its Efficacy, and in Spite of the utmoſt Oppoſition, the Word of the Lord grows mightily and prevails.

In

(a) 1 Cor. 1. 25.

In further discoursing this Point, I propose,

I. To give some short Account of the Gospel of Christ.

II. To shew in what Respects the Apostle had no Reason to be ashamed of this Gospel. And,

III. I shall conclude with some practical Inferences.

As to the *first* of these; The Word rendred *Gospel* signifies glad Tidings, or joyful News; it proclaims *Peace on Earth, and Good-will towards Men*, Liberty to the Captive, Redemption to the Slave, Pardon to the Guilty, and everlasting Salvation to perishing Souls. It sometimes goes under the Name of *the Word of Salvation*, *the Word of Life*, *the Word of Grace*, and *the Grace of God*, because it springs from Grace, and the grand Design of it is to proclaim and display the Glory of Divine Goodness and Mercy in the Redemption of Multitudes ready to perish. Though the Gospel may sometimes denote no more than a Declaration of the Way of Salvation, and a Promise of eternal Life through the Name of the Son of God; yet our Apostle, no doubt, understands it in the Text as importing the whole Christian Revelation, consisting of Doctrines, Laws, Promises, Threatnings, and all these Arguments that are adduced for engaging and influencing Men to receive Christ Jesus the Lord, and to walk in him. Instead of entring into a Detail of the many important Things contained in this sacred Revelation, I shall represent to you in Scriptural Expressions, the Sum and Substance of this Gospel of Christ, (*a*) *The Seed of the Woman shall bruise*

(*a*) Gen. 3. 15. 12. 3. Ps. 89. 19. 40. 6. 72. 17. John 1. 14. 3. 16. Mat. 11. 28, 29. 1 John 5. 11, 12. 1 Cor. 1. 30.

*bruiſe the Head of the Serpent. In thy Seed ſhall all Families of the Earth be bleſſed. I have laid Help upon one that is mighty. Lo, I come, I delight to do thy Will O God. Men ſhall be bleſt in him, all Nations ſhall call him bleſſed. The Word was made Fleſh and dwelt among us. God ſo loved the World that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould not periſh, but have everlaſting Life. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you Reſt; Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of me. He that hath the Son hath Life. He is made of God unto them that believe Wiſdom, Righteouſneſs, Sanctification and Redemption. (a) Who gave himſelf for us that he might redeem us from all our Iniquities, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of good Works. He hath made him to be Sin for us who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteouſneſs of God in him. We know that when he appears we ſhall be like him, for we ſhall ſee him as he is: And every Man that hath this Hope in him, purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.*

From ſuch Paſſages of Scripture as theſe compared with one another, and juſtly explained, we may be able to frame a tolerable Notion of the Goſpel of Chriſt.

But I purpoſe mainly to diſcourſe the *ſecond* general Head; namely, that the Apoſtle was not aſhamed, as no Chriſtian hath any Ground to be aſhamed, of this Goſpel: I ſhall not inſiſt on the Import of this Manner of Expreſſion, *Not aſhamed*, 'tis a ſtrong Way of declaring, that he heartily

(a) Tit. 2. 14. 2 Cor. 5. 21. 1 John 3. 2, 3.

ly embraced, highly approved of, and put an exceeding great Value upon the Goſpel, (*a*) that he counted it *a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave Sinners.* Let us then proceed

II. To enquire into ſome of theſe Things in the Goſpel of Chriſt, or relating to it, whereof our Apoſtle was not aſhamed, nay in which he did glory; And,

1. He was not aſhamed of Jeſus of *Nazareth*, the bleſſed Author of this Goſpel; for (*b*) the great Salvation firſt began to be ſpoken by the Lord, and the Goſpel is the *Revelation of Jeſus Chriſt* which he gave unto his Servants: From the memorable Day on which Chriſt was firſt revealed to *Paul*, and apprehended him in his Way to *Damaſcus*, (*c*) called him from Heaven by Name, and ſeparated him unto the Goſpel of God, cauſed a miraculous Splendor to ſhine around him, and the Light of the Divine Glory to ſhine in his Heart, from that Day forward, the Knowledge of Chriſt became his main Study; the Glory of his Redeemer the great Thing that raviſht his Heart, warmed and conquered his Soul: (*d*) *He determined to know nothing ſo much as Chriſt crucified. Yea doubtleſs he counted all Things Loſs for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt his Lord.* He reckons it greater Honour to be a Servant of Chriſt, than to be accounted a *Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the Stock of Iſrael, of the Tribe of Benjamin*, of the ſtricteſt Sect of the *Jews* a *Phariſee*, a Scholar of the famed *Gamaliel*, a *Roman* Citizen, or whatever elſe either *Jew*

or

(*a*) 1 Tim. 1. 15. (*b*) Heb. 2. 3. (*c*) Acts 8. (*d*) 1 Cor. 2. 2. Philip. 3. 8.

or *Gentile* was wont to value himſelf upon. In one Word, he can ſcarce ever mention the lovely Name of Jeſus without a Rapture, or ſpeak of the Riches of his redeeming Grace, but he ſeems to riſe above Mortality, and his enlarged Soul ſprings up towards the Throne of God and of the Lamb. And indeed, our Apoſtle, with good Reaſon, affirms ſuch great and magnificent Things of the Author of this Divine Revelation, that he had no Reaſon to be aſhamed of him, or to bluſh at any Part of his Character and Hiſtory: Hence he frequently takes Occaſion to enlarge upon the Excellency of his Perſon, the Glory of his Deity, the Fulneſs of Grace conferred on his Humanity; his holy Life and ſhining Example, his Death and Sufferings, and the glorious Reward of his Obedience and Humiliation. Nor let us who pretend to believe the Goſpel be aſhamed of its Author: Let us conſider him in the Character which the ſacred Scriptures give of him, (*a*) as *the mighty God, the Father of Ages, and Prince of Peace*; as *Jehovah* whom the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſaw in his Glory, *high and lifted up, with his Train filling the Temple*, as *the eternal Word*, who *in the Beginning was with God, who was God, and without whom nothing was made that was made*; as *the only begotten Son*; as *the Brightneſs of the Father's Glory, and the expreſs Image of his Perſon.* Let us conſider him as *God over all bleſſed for ever*, as *being in the Form of God, and thinking it no Robbery to be equal with God.* Let us conſider him in that Glory with which he is crowned, that Dignity and Honour, that Majeſty and

(*a*) Iſa. 9. 6, 7. 6. 1——9. with John 12. 41. John 1. 1——4, 14, 18. Rom. 9. 5. Philip. 2. 6, 9, 10. Heb. 1. 2, 3, 4.

and Power to which he is advanced in his mediatory Character, having received *a Name above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, and every Tongue confess that he is Lord.* Let us consider him as thus represented to us in the holy Oracles, and then judge if we can be ashamed of the Author of this Gospel.

2. The Apostle was not ashamed of the Contents of the Gospel, particularly its Doctrines and Precepts: He could challenge the shrewdest Infidel to point out any one Thing absurd and incredible in the one, or intolerable and inconsistent with any of the undoubted Liberties of Mankind in the other: Hence the Apostle took Occasion to assert even the *peculiar Doctrines* of Christianity, when arguing with, and attempting to persuade Men who were violently prejudiced against the Christian Revelation: The Gospel of Christ confirms and illustrates the great Principles of natural Religion; affords such a View of God in his Perfections, Designs, Government of the World, and Relation to his reasonable Creatures, as cannot fail of approving itself to the Reason and Understanding of the best and wisest of Men: And where the Light of Nature fails, (as in a Variety of important Instances it evidently does) the Gospel-revelation brings in a plentiful and delightful Supply. The Apostle did indeed frankly acknowledge, that there were Mysteries in the Gospel, and he declares the Mystery of Godliness to be great; and yet he reckoned it no Reproach to his Reason, no Affront to his Understanding, to believe these very Things which the Light of Nature could not discover, nor the Reason of Man fully explain when revealed; and which he himself, with all his great Parts and Learning, assisted

ſiſted by Divine Illumination, could not comprehend. And indeed it is altogether becoming a reaſonable Creature, to receive the Teſtimony of God, and to believe whatever he ſays, even tho' he can't fully explain it, nor anſwer all the Objections that may be laid againſt it: Suppoſing that God has revealed his Mind (and no Man can prove ſuch a Thing to be abſurd or impoſſible) the Reaſon of Man obliges him to believe the Divine Revelation however inexplicable: For God is Truth, and as none can impoſe upon him, ſo it is impoſſible he can deceive others. All this might be applied to the Doctrines of the Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the Reſurrection of the Body, our Juſtification by the Merits of Chriſt, and Redemption through his Blood. And as the keeneſt Adverſaries of the Chriſtian Faith could never ſhow there was any Thing in theſe Doctrines (as they are revealed *in the Word of God*) contrary to Reaſon; ſo they muſt not pretend to drive Chriſtians from the Belief and Profeſſion of them, merely becauſe we cannot tell how and in what Manner theſe Things are, or give a particular Anſwer to all the Objections, or ſolve all the Difficulties that may occur in the Way of apprehending and conceiving them: For at this Rate, the Gentlemen who argue againſt us will be obliged to deny ſeveral Things which they pretend conſtantly to affirm: Why, for an Inſtance, ſhould they profeſs to believe that there is an *Infinite, Eternal, Immenſe Being*, when it muſt be confeſs'd that *Infinity, Eternity* and *Immenſity* ſwallow up all the Thoughts of a created Mind, and the moſt enlarged penetrating Underſtanding loſes itſelf in purſuing after them? Why will they believe that the Souls and Bodies of Men (quite different Subſtances,

ſtances, and endowed with very different Qualities) do mutually influence and act upon one another? They ought firſt to explain ſuch difficult Things as theſe, which muſt be admitted in their own Scheme; and then they may with a better Grace, demand of us a clearer Explication of Things confeſſedly hard and difficult in the Chriſtian Revelation: But while this remains unattempted, the Charge of Credulity laid upon us will be unanſwerably retorted upon themſelves.

It muſt be owned, that notwithſtanding all the Benefit and Advantage ariſing from Divine Revelation; we muſt be content, while we are in this State of Imperfection, not only to remain ignorant of a great many Things, but alſo to apprehend very imperfectly theſe very Things which in Part we know: And whatever Schemes Men may frame or contrive for themſelves, the Caſe will be much the ſame: But it is a peculiar Advantage, and affords no ſmall Comfort to us who are Chriſtians, that we have ſolid Ground to expect a future eternal State, and are called to the lively Hope of arriving at much higher Degrees of Light and Knowledge in the World of Glory.

Further, The Apoſtle was not aſhamed of the Precepts of Chriſtianity, the Rules of the Goſpel: And indeed the Purity, the Reaſonableneſs, the Goodneſs of them cannot faill of recommending them to the Love and Practice of wiſe and reaſonable Men: For *whatſoever Things are true, whatſoever Things are lovely, juſt and of good Report, if there was any Vertue, any praiſe,* (a) theſe were the

(a) Phil. iv. 8, 9.

the Things conſtantly recommended by Chriſt and his Apoſtles: Nor was the World ever bleſt with ſo compleat, ſo beautiful and conſiſtent a Scheme of moral Duties as the Goſpel of Chriſt preſents us withal. Hence, as our Apoſtle chearfully ſubjected his whole Soul to the Laws of Chriſt, ſo he takes particular Care conſtantly to recommend to others the Practice of Chriſtianity: After having diſpatched the doctrinal Part of his Epiſtles, he very warmly addreſſes the Chriſtians to whom he writes, exhorting them with great Earneſtneſs to ſtudy and practiſe univerſal Holineſs; pointing out to them the ſeveral Branches of their Duty; aſſuring them at the ſame Time, that without Holineſs they could not ſee the Lord (*b*). They who read the ſacred Writings will find Examples to this Purpoſe towards the Cloſe of the Epiſtles. Before I proceed to another Head, I ſhall obſerve, that there is one Thing contributes exceedingly to prevent a Chriſtian's being aſhamed of Chriſt as his Lawgiver (beſides the Reaſonableneſs and Excellency of the Laws themſelves) namely, that he feels the Efficacy of that Grace which is promiſed in the Goſpel diſpoſing and enabling him to obey the Precepts of the Law; *This holy Law is written on his Heart, God puts his Fear within him, the Spirit of Glory and of God dwells in and reſts upon him, ſo that the Yoke of Chriſt becomes eaſy, his Commandments are not grievous, through Chriſt ſtrengthening him he can do all Things, and looking to Jeſus he runs with Patience and Joy the Race that is ſet before him.*



(*b*) Rom. xii. 1, 2, 3, 9---21. Eph. iv. 5, 6. Col. iii. 4. 1 Theſ. v. 14---23. Heb. xiii.

If to all this we ſhall add the Conſideration of theſe prevailing Motives and Arguments which the Goſpel makes Uſe of for perſuading Men to deny Ungodlineſs and practiſe univerſal Goodneſs; ſuch as, the boundleſs Mercy of God, the dying Love of Jeſus, the Hope of an immortal Happineſs, and the terrible Apprehenſion of never ending Miſery, nothing can contribute to work with greater Efficacy upon reaſonable Minds: So that in this Reſpect alſo, there is no Reaſon why we ſhould be aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt.

3. The Apoſtle was not aſhamed of the Evidences of the Truth and Certainty of the Divine Original and Authority of the Goſpel: And accordingly he did very ſucceſsfully plead and defend the Chriſtian Cauſe putting to ſilence theſe very Men, who accounted of him as a Babler. He proved unanſwerably both againſt Jews and Gentiles, that Jeſus was a Teacher come from God; and conſequently that he had a Right to claim the Character, and apply to himſelf the Marks of the *Meſſias*, who had been ſpoke of and promiſed in a former Revelation; which Revelation is likewiſe beautifully illuſtrated, and ſtrongly confirmed by the Goſpel.

If we ſhall apply the internal Marks of a Divine Revelation to the Goſpel of Jeſus Chriſt, it will appear to every impartial Enquirer, that it is in all Reſpects worthy of *all Acceptation*: As every Part of it is worthy of God, ſo the whole of it hath a direct Tendency to promote the Honour of the ſupreme Lord, and to advance the Felicity and Perfection of reaſonable Creatures: And after all the Noiſe that hath been made for want of external Evidence; even we who live long after the Ages of In-

Inſpiration and Miracles have no Reaſon, in this Reſpect, to be aſhamed of our Faith.

Every proper Atteſtation was largely afforded to our Lord from Heaven: He was anointed with the Holy Ghoſt and with Power; In every Thing he ſaid or did God was evidently with him; and the Evidence of a Divine Preſence was in a ſpecial Manner undeniable in his miraculous Operations.

Neither the Sincerity nor Capacity of the Witneſſes of his Reſurrection ought to be called in Queſtion, unleſs it be aſſerted, that there can be no convincing Proof of any Fact whatſoever: Where the Evidence is ſufficient is it not unreaſonable to demand more; eſpecially when the Men who make the Demand ſet up for *thinking freely*, and enquiring impartially, and who, as they pretend never to *admit*, ſo neither ought they ever to *reject* any Thing without Reaſon?

The Spirit of Chriſt did likewiſe reſt upon his Apoſtles, ſo that they ſpoke and acted miraculouſly.

It is true, we never ſaw any of theſe miraculous Doings, nor did we ever hear an Apoſtle declaring in a Variety of Languages (a Gift immediately conferr'd by the Holy Ghoſt) the wonderful Works of God: That is, we happened not to live ſeventeen hundred Years ago: But then have we not as good and unexceptionable a traditional Evidence as can be expected at ſuch a Diſtance of Time, as credible an Account of theſe Things as may ſatisfy any ſober reaſonable Man? Nay, the punctual and ſurpriſing Accompliſhment of many important Events predicted by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, is to us, in theſe latter Ages, an *additional* Proof and

Evidence of the Truth of Chriſtianity. For, who can think of ſuch amazing Events as the Deſtruction of the Temple and City of *Jeruſalem*; the long continued dreadful Diſperſion of the Jews; the ſwift and extenſive Propagation of Chriſtianity; the Riſe, Progreſs and Greatneſs of Antichriſt? Who can view ſuch Things as theſe in a fair and impartial Light, without acknowledging, that Jeſus Chriſt was a true Prophet, the great Meſſenger of the Moſt High God, and that neither he nor his Apoſtles did deal in cunningly deviſed Fables.

Beſides, every true Chriſtian feels the Goſpel of Chriſt realized in his own Soul; he feels the Power and Efficacy of the Truth as it is in Jeſus enlightning his Mind, purifying his Heart, raiſing his Soul above the World, and transforming him into a living Image of his bleſſed Saviour.

The Doctrine then is certainly of God; and in reſpect of Evidence, we are not aſhamed of the Goſpel.

This leads to another Particular,

4. The Apoſtle was not aſhamed of the Iſſue and Reſult of the Succeſs of the Goſpel Revelation: However contemn'd, oppos'd, perſecuted by the World, it quickly proved the Power of God and the Wiſdom of God to the Salvation of many Souls: Upon the Proclamation of the great Goſpel Jubilee, Multitudes of Captives were ſet at Liberty, the Works of the Devil were deſtroyed, the Territories of the great Deſtroyer laid waſte; Atheiſm, Idolatry, Cruelty, Senſuality, and every evil Work fled at the Sound of the Word, diſappear'd at the bright ſhining of the Goſpel Revelation, as the Morning Miſts are ſcattered by the riſing Sun: When Thouſands of prophane, impure, carnal and barbarous

Crea-

Creatures did all of a ſudden become holy, tractable, humble and heavenly, and when ſuch an aſtoniſhing Reformation was effected by the Preaching of the Goſpel of Chriſt, it was reaſonable to acknowledge that the *Finger of God was there.* The Apoſtle had good reaſon to challenge all the Philoſophy, all the Learning, Wiſdom and Authority in the World to produce Effects, in any Sort, to be compared with theſe which followed upon preaching of the Goſpel (*c*). *Where is the Wiſe, where is the Scribe, where is the Diſputer of this World? Hath not God made fooliſh the Wiſdom of this World?*

This Argument will ſtill grow ſtronger, the more univerſally and effectually that the Word of God ſhall prevail; and when all Nations ſhall ſee the Salvation of God; it will then appear how little Reaſon there is to be aſhamed of the Goſpel.

5. The Apoſtle was not aſhamed of the Way and Manner in which the Goſpel was propagated, nor of the deſpiſed Inſtruments employed in publiſhing to Mankind the glad Tidings of the Kingdom. Let the World count this Method the Fooliſhneſs of preaching; let them repreſent the Miniſters of Chriſt as Men of no Senſe at all, or of ſuch ſhrewd Senſe that they can frame and execute Deſigns of turning the World upſide down: Nevertheleſs, after this Manner and by ſuch Inſtruments it hath pleaſed the All-wiſe God to accompliſh the Deliverance and Redemption of them that believe: And (*d*) *we have this Treaſure in earthen Veſſels that the Excellency of the Power may be of God.* It might ſeem more ſuitable to the Wiſdom of the World,

 that

(*c*) 1 Cor. i. 20. (*d*) 2 Cor. iv. 7.

that the Will of God ſhould have been publiſh'd in another Manner, and very different Inſtruments employed in managing ſo great a Deſign: But then it ought always to be conſidered, that the Wiſdom of this World is very different from that Wiſdom which cometh from above, that God's Thoughts are not as ours, and that God is wiſer than Men.

To conclude the doctrinal Part of this Diſcourſe; The Apoſtle was not aſhamed of that Article of the Chriſtian Faith, which occaſioned greateſt Scandal both to *Jews* and *Greeks*, namely the tragical and ignominious Death of Chriſt: It gave Offence to all the World, that he who profeſt to be the Son of God and Saviour of Men ſhould be numbered with the Tranſgreſſors, and die as a Malefactor: The Men of *Iſrael* argued from this, that he falſly pretended to be their Deliverer, when, in their Apprehenſion, he could not deliver himſelf; and the conceited *Gentiles* could never imagine, that one who ſuffered ſo ignominiouſly, ſhould be ſet up as the univerſal Teacher and Saviour of Mankind. But our inſpired Apoſtle, who well underſtood that (e) *thus it was written, and thus it behoved Chriſt to ſuffer*, he who was well acquainted with the Fellowſhip of Chriſt's Sufferings, as well as the Power of his Reſurrection; he who underſtood what noble Ends and Purpoſes were ſerved by the Son of God's offering up himſelf a Sacrifice, he was ſo far from concealing, that on all Occaſions he publiſhed and declared the meritorious Death and expiatory Sufferings of the Lord Jeſus. Nay in this he chiefly gloried: (f) *God forbid that I ſhould glory*,

(e) Luke xxiv. 46. (f) Gal. vi. 14.

*glory save in the Cross of Christ*: And indeed when we consider the Death of Christ as the Cause and Foundation of our Life; when we consider that by his Stripes we are healed; that in this Way God is reconciled, the Attonement made, Trangression finish'd and everlasting Righteousness introduced; instead of being ashamed of Christ crucified, we ought to join in that delightful Doxology, (g) *Unto him that loved us and washed us from our Sins in his own Blood, to him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever.*

III. I proceed in the last Place to make some Inferences.

1. What a Honour and Happiness is it that we profess a Religion, and believe a Gospel which we have no Reason to be ashamed of. The Apostle *Paul* was a Man of great Parts and Learning; and withal once abundantly prejudiced against Christianity; But no sooner are his Prejudices removed than he perceives the Reasonableness, the Beauty and Excellency of it, and employs all the eminent Gifts and Talents God had given him in recommending it to the Esteem of his Fellow-creatures. And indeed nothing can be more lovely and inviting than true primitive Christianity; nothing more amiable and engaging than the genuine uncorrupted *Gospel* of *Jesus Christ*, the *Gospel* freed from the unwarrantable Additions Men have made unto it, and the wretched Disguises they have put upon it. The *Gospel*, in its native Beauty and primitive Simplicity approv'd itself to the Reason and Understanding, conquer'd the Hearts and ravish'd the Af-



(g) Rev. i. 5.

ſections of Multitudes, who choſe rather to ſacrifice their Lives and expire in Tortures, who willingly embraced, yea earneſtly courted, Death in all its formidable Shapes rather than blaſpheme the ſacred Name of Jeſus, or deny the Lord that bought them. And in ſeveral Ages, there have been great Numbers of wiſe, learned and holy Men (whoſe Judgment did not appear to be under any unreaſonable Byaſs) who have declared that the Doctrines of the Goſpel appear'd unto them, after the moſt accurate and impartial Examination, to be the true and faithful Sayings of God.

2. That can be no true Goſpel, nor any Part of it, neither ought it to be received as a Divine Revelation, which, when impartially and deliberately examined, would make a wiſe and reaſonable Man aſhamed, or put a ſincere and humble Enquirer to the Bluſh. If there was not an intrinſick Beauty and Goodneſs in Chriſtianity, all the external Evidences of it would ſignify little: And whatever Proofs one may be ſuppoſed to bring in Behalf of a Religion, abſurd in its Nature and pernicious in its Tendency and Deſign, muſt paſs for nothing at all. Whatever Doctrines are unworthy of God; whatever Practices are diſhonouring to him, and ruining to his reaſonable Creatures; theſe can no more come from God than Darkneſs can be ſuppoſed to ſpring from Light, or Diſcord to flow from Harmony. And by this Rule we may form a Judgment not only of the Worſhip and Theology of the ancient *Pagans*, (which they ſo teraciouſly maintained in Oppoſition to Chriſtianity) and of the Deluſions of *Mahomet*, but alſo of the abſurd Principles and impious Practices of the Church of *Rome*: And indeed of all theſe abſurd and

and fanciful Things admitted and defended by Chriſtians of what Denomination ſoever, who have preſumed to tamper with the ſacred Revelation, and to depart from the original Simplicity of the Goſpel.

3. As it is a diſtinguiſh'd Piece of Honour to be employ'd in diſpenſing the Ordinances of the Goſpel; ſo the Chriſtian Church is very little obliged to theſe who run down the Miniſtry of the Goſpel as an idle and unneceſſary Inſtitution. It may be obſerved, that when Men have been framing Deſigns againſt Chriſtianity in the moſt artful Manner they could deviſe, the firſt and warmeſt Attacks were uſually made upon theſe who preſided in the Chriſtian Aſſemblies; In this very Way our modern Unbelievers took Care to introduce the open Attempts they have lately made upon Chriſtianity in particular and Divine Revelation in general: And in this they act very conſiſtently, for nothing can more effectually prepare People for throwing off Chriſtianity, than firſt perſuading them to throw off their Teachers: Hence it was found very expedient to repreſent the Miniſters of the Goſpel and their Office in the moſt ridiculous Light: And it is not this or the other Form of Worſhip they are pleaſed to ridicule, but all publick Miniſtrations, and all who are employed about them muſt be run down at once, they know of no Title any Man has to teach his Neighbour, ſave that which ariſes from ſuperior Abilities, and a larger Meaſure of Underſtanding. As it is plain from the Goſpel that Chriſt hath eſtabliſh'd an Order and Succeſſion of Men to overſee his Church, and to feed the Flock committed to them by the great Shepherd; ſo it were no hard Matter (the preſent Circumſtances of Mankind conſidered)

to

to make out the extreme Uſefulneſs, at leaſt, and Expediency of ſuch an Inſtitution. It is not expedient, doubtleſs, for us who miniſter in holy Things to glory; But may we not venture to affirm (and even to appeal upon it to Experience and Obſervation) that any ſmall Remains of Religion, of Piety, Juſtice, Temperance, Honeſty and Charity, which are at this Day to be found in the Chriſtian World are, in ſome Meaſure, owing to the Preaching of the Goſpel, and to the other Labours and Endeavours of theſe who are employ'd in the Work of the Miniſtry? There have likewiſe been good Numbers of ſincere undeſigning People, who declare that, in attending the Ordinances of the Goſpel, they have felt theſe extraordinary Aſſiſtances conveyed, whereby they have been raiſed above the World, and enabled to live unto God. If theſe Gentlemen, who ridicule the Miniſtry of the Goſpel, are perſuaded that publick Worſhip and Inſtruction can be noways uſeful to them; if they are ſo vaſtly wiſer than their Teachers; if their Taſte is ſo delicate, and their Knowledge ſo extenſive; if they are ſo throughly confirmed in Virtue and Goodneſs, that they don't want our Aſſiſtance ſo much as to put them in Mind of any Part of their Duty; if this be really their Caſe; yet why ſhould they grudge our being helpful to others who are not bleſſed with all their Advantages and Abilities? Let us at leaſt be allowed, without Moleſtation, to preach the Goſpel to the Poor, to inſtruct the Ignorant, to relieve the Diſtreſs'd, and to uſe our beſt Endeavours towards reclaiming thoſe who are confeſſedly out of the Way.

But if we would not bring the Goſpel into Contempt, then,

4. It

4. It is incumbent on us who are honoured to preach the unſearchable Riches of Chriſt to act as becomes the Servants of ſuch a Lord, to exert our ſelves with the utmoſt Vigour, Diligence and Reſolution to promote the great Ends of the Goſpel, namely the Honour of God and Edification of his Church. (*a*) We ought *therefore to take heed firſt to our ſelves, and then to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made us Overſeers.* Let us beware leſt we our ſelves receive this *Grace of God in vain*; Leſt we be Strangers to the Power and Practice of that Religion which we recommend ſo warmly to others. Let us carefully watch over our Temper and Behaviour. Let *Holineſs to the Lord* be written on our Hearts and ſhine in our Lives; ſo that we may be able to addreſs our Hearers in the Language of the Apoſtle, (*b*) *Be ye Followers of us as we are of Chriſt.* We may declaim againſt Vice and Immorality in the moſt perſuaſive Language, and recommend the pleaſing Paths of Virtue in the moſt alluring Manner; we may run down Pride and Hypocriſy, Worldly-mindedneſs and Senſuality, Paſſion, Revenge, and every evil Thing; we may preach and pray, ſpeak and write, and if we have a Mind, fight too for Chriſtianity; but if our Practice ſhall prove a Contradiction to our Profeſſion, if we ſhall take no Care to tranſcribe the Temper and imitate the Life of the Bleſſed Jeſus; the World will never believe, they ought not to believe, that we are in Earneſt. But, as we ſhould take heed to our ſelves, ſo we muſt carefully

(*a*) Acts 20. 28. (*b*) 1 Cor. 11. 1.

carefully feed the Flock of Chriſt, watching over the Souls committed to our Charge, as thoſe that muſt give an Account; ſeeking the Approbation of our great Lord, rather than the Applauſes of all Mankind: And if we would diſcharge our Duty ſucceſsfully and acceptably; we muſt by all Means take Care, (c) *To preach not our ſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord*: As Chriſt is the Centre of all Divine Revelation, ſo all our Diſcourſes ought to reſpect to him, and terminate in him; and in vain do we pretend to preach the Goſpel, if this be not the Scope of our Preaching to perſuade Men firſt to receive Chriſt, and then to walk in him, to believe in his Name, and walk as his Diſciples: Our Apoſtle declares, that for his Part, he *determined to know nothing* among theſe to whom he preached the Goſpel, *ſave Jeſus Chriſt and him crucified*: It was in this Method of Preaching that the Goſpel proved ſo amazingly ſucceſsful in the infant State of the Chriſtian Church; when the Miniſters of the Word went forth (d) *Preaching the Lord Jeſus, the Hand of the Lord was with them, and many believed and turned unto the Lord.*

Not only in our publick Miniſtrations, but in the whole of our Management, we ought to have a great Regard to the Edification of the Body of Chriſt: And as it is not reaſonable that we ſhould depart from the Privileges annexed to our Office, ſo neither ought we, on the other Hand, to tyrannize over the Flock of Chriſt, bought at ſo dear a Rate; we muſt *not lord it over God's Heritage, but ſhow our ſelves Enſamples to the Flock* (e), having

(c) 2 Cor. iv. 5. (d) Acts xi. 20, 21. (e) 1 Pet. v. 2, 3.

having the Teſtimony of our Conſciences, and making it evident to the Church, that we take the Overſight of them, and labour among them, *Not for the Sake of filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind*, the Law of Chriſt and a tender Regard to the precious Souls of Men, powerfully influencing and conſtraining us (*f*). Nor muſt *the Servant of the Lord ſtrive, but be gentle unto all Men, apt to teach, in Meekneſs inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves.*

5. If the Goſpel of Chriſt is ſuch a reaſonable and excellent Inſtitution, then, how bleſſed are the People who know the joyful Sound, and what a ſingular Advantage muſt it be to have Acceſs to the Means of Grace: In the Dawn of this Goſpel-day, the Old Teſtament Saints rejoiced, how much happier are we who (*g*) *Behold with open Face as in a Glaſs the Glory of the Lord? God hath made Light to ariſe upon us; and the Day ſpring from on high hath viſited us.* Our Privileges are great, and the Account we are to make will be very ſolemn: It concerns every Chriſtian then to be in Earneſt, that the Goſpel may prove the Power of God to his Salvation: They who enjoy the Light ſhould *walk in the Light*; and let *every one that names the Name of Chriſt depart from Iniquity.*

It would contribute exceedingly to the Honour of Chriſtianity, and afford great Comfort and Encouragement to the Miniſters of the Goſpel, if Men would be perſuaded to adorn this Doctrine of God our Saviour by a holy and religious Converſation. The primitive Chriſtians diſtinguiſhed themſelves in ſo eminent a Manner by the Holineſs of

(*f*) 2 Tim. ii. 24. (*g*) 2 Cor. iii. 18.

of their Lives, that the ancient Writers, in their *Apologies*, compoſed in Behalf of the Chriſtian Cauſe, could freely appeal to this as an Evidence of the Truth and Power of Chriſtianity: They juſtly argued that the Doctrine muſt needs be of God, which wrought ſo amazingly, and ſo evidently upon Men. Alas! in theſe degenerate miſerable Times, every one muſt needs ſee what a dangerous Thing it would be to put the Trial of Chriſtianity upon ſuch an Iſſue: Inſtead of referring the Adverſaries of Chriſtianity to the Lives and Converſations of great Numbers who bear the Chriſtian Name, we muſt appeal from their Practices to the Genius, the Principles and Precepts of that holy Religion to which they do falſly pretend, and are truly a Reproach and Diſgrace.

We ſhould be able to argue more ſucceſsfully, and to plead the Cauſe of Chriſt with greater Confidence, if we could prevail upon theſe who profeſs Chriſtianity (*b*), *To walk as Chriſt alſo walked.* If our Hearts and Lives were brought to a Conformity to the Goſpel; if Chriſtians would only be what they ſhould be, and what their Chriſtian Profeſſion indiſpenſibly obliges them to be; the boldeſt Infidel would bluſh to open a Mouth againſt us or our Religion; Infidelity, tho' it might lurk in the Dark, and whiſper in a Corner, would be aſhamed to appear, as it now openly doth, at Noon-day. Alas, that the good Way of God is reproach'd, and the Name of Chriſt blaſphem'd thro' the Miſcarriages of thoſe who pretend to be of his Retinue. Let

(*b*) 1 John ii. 6.

Let us ſhow our ſelves Men; let us ſhow our ſelves Chriſtians.

6. If the Excellency of the Goſpel of Chriſt appears ſo evidently, even in this imperfect State, and amidſt all theſe Difficulties and Diſadvantages with which it is attended, then, what a beautiful Scheme of Things will be laid open in the Light of celeſtial Glory; when all the noble and exalted Ends of this Goſpel ſhall be fully reach'd, and the Myſtery of God ſhall be finiſhed: When the whole redeemed Aſſembly ſhall appear before God in *Sion*, when the Day ſhall break and the Shadows flee away; when in God's Light we ſhall ſee Light; when we ſhall worſhip there where there is no Temple; no Occaſion for the Ordinances of the Goſpel, which (tho' they are indeed Means of our attaining Nearneſs to God) are plainly calculated and deſigned for this State of Weakneſs, Darkneſs, and Diſtance: And when among other Things it ſhall appear in a *new* and *Divine Light*, that the Inhabitants of Heaven were train'd up and fitted for that State of conſummate Perfection and Felicity, by theſe very *Means of Grace*, which they enjoyed here upon Earth, it will then appear what good Reaſon this inſpired Apoſtle had to ſay, *I am not aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt.*

FINIS.

Let us shew our selves Men, let us shew our selves Christians.

6. If the Excellency of the Gospel of Christ appears so evidently, even in this imperfect State, and amidst all such Difficulties and Disadvantages with which it is attended, then, what a beauti ful Scheme of Things will be laid open in the Light of celestial Glory; when all the noble and real Ends of this Gospel shall be fully reach'd, and the Mystery of God shall be finished: When the whole redeemed Assembly shall appear before God in Sion: when the Day shall break and the Shadows flee away; when in God's Light we shall see Light: when we shall worship where there is no Temple, no Occasion for the Ordinances of the Gospel, which (tho' they are indeed Means of our attaining Nearness to God) are plainly calculated and designed for this State of Weakness and Trouble, and Distance: And when among other Things, shall appear in a new and Divine Light, that Multitude of Inhabitants of Heaven were raised up and fitted for that State of consummate Perfection and Felicity, by the very Means of Grace, which they enjoyed here upon Earth; it will then appear what good Reason this inspired Apostle had to say, I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

BRITISH MUSEUM 14 JY 74

FINIS